THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Contravention of Customs Act by DPC

523. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Dhabhol Power Company (DPC) has reportedly shifted certain imported critical components from its Guhagar Plant, which were extended a concessional rate of Customs Duty;

(b) if so, the action taken by Government against DPC to confiscate these components as the same is in contravention of Section 111(0) of Customs Act; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) On being asked to explain, DPC have stated, *vide* letter dated 28.1.2002, that certain components were removed from the project site for security reasons and that all these components are presently lying in their custody. A writ petition was filed by them in this regard in the Bombay High Court and in pursuance of the directions of the hon'ble Court, the said components were produced before it on 24.1.2002. DPC has also clarified that the components would be used in the power project whenever it resumes operation.

The reply given by DPC is being examined by the jurisdictional Customs authorities for taking appropriate action.

Cut down on subsidies

524. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Finance had requested the Ministry of Civil Aviation to cut down the subsidy on Haj Pilgrimage this year; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the response of the Ministry of Civil Aviation in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) It has been decided by the Government to fix the fare for Haj pilgrims at Rs. 12,000. For the balance amount, subsidy will be provided. The matter of reduction in subsidy is to be examined by the Ministry of Civil Aviation separately.

Inflation rate

525. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Inflation rate touched an almost two decade low during the recent week; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The annual point to point inflation rate (based on Wholesale Price Index) in the first six months of 2001-02 (April-September) remained close to 5 per cent level. It started declining after September to reach a low 1.13 per cent in the week ending February 9, 2002 which was the lowest since January 27, 1979, when the inflation rate had touched a low level of 1 per cent. There was virtually no price rise in the manufactured sector which registered just about 0.2 per cent annual price rise by February, 2002, though in the primary product group, which includes agriculture commodities, the price rise was 3.17 per cent. The effect of the rise in prices of the fuel group experienced last year, due to an increase in administered prices of fuel products, evened out during 2001-02 and the annual inflation in the fuel group stood at 1.6 per cent in February, 2002.

UTIs holdings in five companies

526. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Unit Trust of India has sought Government's approval to divest holdings in five companies;

(b) if so, the details of these companies;

(c) whether their proposal has been approved; and

(d) if so, by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?